

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

051708Z Apr 04

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 001343

SIPDIS

STATE FOR PM/RSAT AND PM/PMAT; JCS FOR J-5 INMA COALITION AFFAIRS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/05/2019

TAGS: [IT](#) [IZ](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [IRAQI](#) [FREEDOM](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY ON ANTI-COALITION VIOLENCE IN IRAQ

REF: A. (A) STATE 74537

[1](#)B. (B) FBIS EUP20040405000110

Classified By: DCM EMIL M. SKODON, REASON 1.5 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. SUMMARY: (C) Italian officials agree on the need to respond firmly to al-Sadr's challenge to the Coalition's authority. MFA noted the importance of not allowing Jaysh al-Mahdi to establish a "territorial presence." The Italians also believe that Iran should share our interest in containing al-Sadr; FM Frattini was seeking as of Monday night to contact Iranian FM Kharazzi with that message. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (C) Early April 5, Embassy delivered reftel points to high officials in the Italian Foreign Ministry, Prime Minister's office, and Defense Ministry. We accompanied this with an expression of sympathy for the three Italian Carabinieri who had been injured in responding to the demonstrations. MFA Political Director Massolo told DCM that Italy understood the need for coalition unity. He pointed to the statement of FM Frattini in an Italian newspaper that morning (Ref B) reiterating "no change" in the Italian military mandate. Massolo said that Italy is also worried, especially about the prospect that al-Sadr could come to control the situation on the ground, or establish certain territory under his exclusive control, without a coalition presence. (Massolo also took the opportunity to express concern about Senator Lugar's comment that the June 30 date for transfer of sovereignty might slip. DCM replied that we have no indication that Sen. Lugar's comment reflects any change in our firm plans for June 30).

[1](#)3. (C) Paolo Dionisi, Deputy Diplomatic Adviser to PM Berlusconi, told PolMC that al-Sadr's actions increase the importance to the coalition of working with other Shi'a leaders, particularly al-Sistani. Al-Sadr's followers, though devoted to their leader, did not enjoy a good reputation among most Iraqi Shi'a. It would be important to convince the Shi'a that al-Sadr's strategic choice was the wrong one for them. In this, al-Sistani would be important, but the Coalition should also reach out to al-Hakim and SCIRI.

[1](#)4. (C) Dionisi also noted that Tehran should share our interest in preventing a violent showdown between a Shi'a faction and the coalition. He repeated the offer that Berlusconi's chief dip adviser, Gianni Castellaneta, made during his March 19 meetings at the White House: to convey directly to Iran messages of particular concern to the US. PolMC agreed that Iran should share our interest in Iraqi stability, and noted that the USG has the capability of conveying such messages reliably to the Iranian government. Dionisi thought that Lebanese Shi'a groups could also play a positive role in calming the situation in southern Iraq, listing Fadlallah and the younger Shams al-Din as two who would have some influence with al-Hakim and other Iraqi Shi'a leaders. (COMMENT: Dionisi is something of an expert on Shia' politics, having served last in Beirut. In November, he undertook a mission to Baghdad and Basra on Berlusconi's behalf to consult with Shi'a leaders and prepare a report on the situation. End comment).

[1](#)5. (C) Late in the day, MFA Director-General (A/S equivalent for the Middle East) Ricardo Sessa confirmed to PolMC that FM Frattini was seeking to place a call to Iranian FM Kharazzi to urge Iran to contribute to calming the situation. Sessa also asked whether Ref A points contained any specific action request for the Italian military, given the late afternoon announcement of an arrest order being issued for al-Sadr. PolMC replied that any request that concerned actions on the ground by the Italian contingent would be passed through Coalition military authorities in Iraq. The non-paper was instead a general statement of what we had done, and a request for Coalition solidarity on the ground and in public statements.

[1](#)6. (C) Defense Minister Martino has been in Brussels for an EU meeting, and has not seen the full text of Ref A demarche.

However, his Dip Adviser, Francesco Trupiano, was informed by MoD of our points and contacted PolMilCouns. Trupiano said only that Martino is deeply concerned about the safety of the Italian contingent in Nasiriya, and especially interested in any information the Coalition may have that could affect the contingent's assignment.

17. Minimize considered.

Visit Rome's Classified Website:

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/rome/index.cf> m

SEMBLER

NNNN

2004ROME01343 - Classification: CONFIDENTIAL